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## **The Church prays for peace in Ukraine and for the victims of covid** Every nation celebrates Holy Mass on a day during Lent

The Church in Europe is gathering around the Eucharistic table. From Ash Wednesday, and throughout Lent, the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences of our continent will celebrate Holy Mass to invoke peace and to pray for those who have died as a result of war and of covid.

The European bishops join Pope Francis' appeal *"to make 2 March, Ash Wednesday, a Day of Fasting for Peace. I encourage believers in a special way to dedicate themselves intensely to prayer and fasting on that day"*.

We wish to unite our voice, affirms H. E. Msgr. Gintaras Grušas, Archbishop of Vilnius and CCEE President, to that of the Pope in calling for a halt to weapons, an immediate end to the war in Ukraine and for work towards peace: *"The reasons for peace are stronger than any calculation of special interests and any reliance on the use of weapons"*.

This time of Lent is also an opportunity to reaffirm the Church's closeness to those who have suffered, and are still struggling, with the coronavirus, to call for an end to the pandemic and, during Holy Mass, to remember the victims of covid – the many victims.

The initiative includes all the Bishops' Conferences of Europe according to the attached calendar and will see, as last year, each national Bishops' Conference involved in organising at least one Mass. This is intended to be a sign of communion and hope for the entire continent; a time for fasting and prayer *"to feel like brothers and sisters and to implore God to end the war"*.